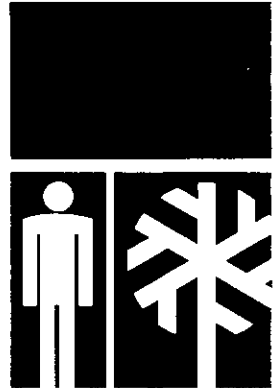
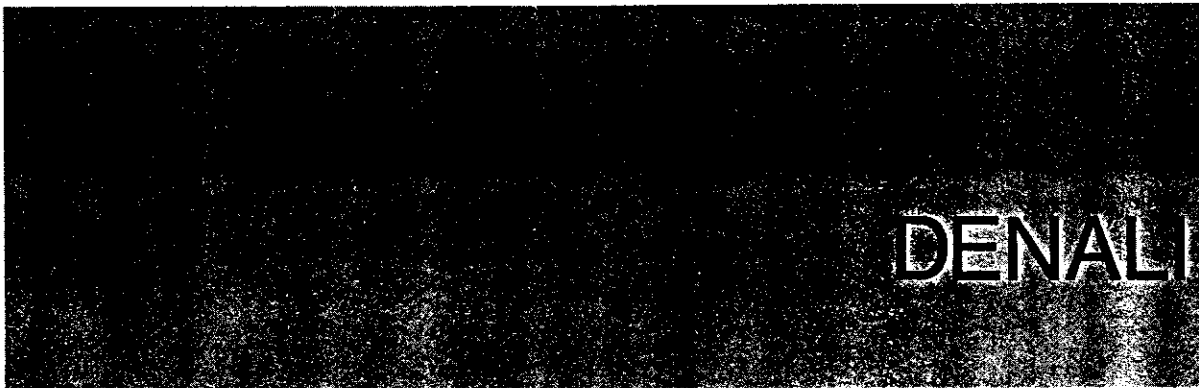


final environmental impact statement
wilderness recommendation



NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE / ALASKA

ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This section describes the proposed action and three alternatives for possible additions to wilderness at Denali National Park and Preserve. It also includes a map of lands considered for designation under each alternative, a scenario of possible developments and uses under each alternative, and a table summarizing these scenarios. The possible development and use scenarios are based on the wilderness areas being considered under the alternatives, proposals in the General Management Plan, activities and developments identified by the public during the scoping process (see the "Consultation and Coordination" section for scoping information), potential activities or developments identified in ANILCA, and projections by the National Park Service based on current trends in visitor use. The scenarios are not NPS proposals; rather, they are our best professional judgments of the developments and uses that might occur in response to public interests and management needs in the next 30-40 years based on trends projected under each alternative to meet the objectives of that alternative. The scenarios have been developed for the purpose of analyzing possible environmental impacts in the FEIS to meet the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. A summary comparison of environmental impacts is presented at the end of the section.

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

ANILCA 202(3) expanded Mount McKinley National Park by about 2.5 million acres to a total of about 4.7 million acres, created Denali National Preserve encompassing about 1.3 million acres, and redesignated the whole as Denali National Park and Preserve. Collectively, the park and preserve now contain about 6 million acres.

ANILCA 701(1) designated approximately 1.9 million acres of Denali National Park as wilderness, to be managed in accordance with provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act. The area covered by this designation comprised most of what had been Mount McKinley National Park, with the exception of developed areas at Riley Creek and Wonder Lake, a corridor extending 150 feet from either side of the centerline of the park road, and lands east of the railroad right-of-way. Since the passage of ANILCA, more accurate acreage figures show that there are about 2.1 million acres in the designated Denali wilderness.

The wilderness suitability study included in the 1986 General Management Plan (GMP) found an additional 3.9 million acres to be technically suitable for wilderness. Based on the more accurate acreage figures available today, the areas identified in the GMP are estimated to comprise about 3.7 million acres. This acreage represents the previously excluded lands east of the George Parks Highway (Alaska Highway 3) plus all of the new park and preserve additions with only two exceptions: A major portion of the Kantishna mining district was determined to be unsuitable for wilderness because of serious disturbance to the landscape, especially within the

stream corridors, caused by past mining and associated development; and the lands beneath the Muddy River, the Kantishna River downstream from the confluence with the Muddy, and a segment of the Tokositna River were excluded from the study area because they are covered by waters that have been determined to be navigable. .

Of the estimated 3,726,343 acres in the study area, approximately 1,967 acres are nonfederal lands that have been conveyed to the state, Ahtna, Inc. (a native regional corporation), or private landowners. Most of these lands are in the northernmost preserve and in the park just west of Cantwell. Although these lands contain important wilderness characteristics, they would not be eligible for wilderness unless they were acquired by the federal government. Some of these tracts have been identified for acquisition in the land protection plan included in the 1986 GMP. Because the nonfederal lands comprise only about one-twentieth of one percent of the total study area, they are not treated as a separate category for the purpose of analysis in this EIS. However, wherever nonfederal lands are included in the acreage considered for wilderness, it is understood that these properties can only be considered as potential wilderness additions on the basis that they might come under federal ownership at some time in the future.

All other lands in the study area currently meet the criteria for designation as wilderness as described in the Wilderness Act and the NPS policies for wilderness areas. Of these lands, approximately 66,573 acres have been selected by the state or by native corporations or villages, and an additional 110 acres are small tracts/native allotments that are still under application. If any of these lands are conveyed, they will no longer be eligible for wilderness unless they are acquired by the federal government at some time in the future. An additional 3,400 acres at Stampede and along the southern boundary have unpatented mining claims on them. These lands are generally undisturbed to date, and no mining activity is foreseen at this time; however, if any of the claims are patented, the lands will no longer be eligible for wilderness. Similarly there are 25 potential RS 2477 rights-of-way in the study area, and should any of these be validated, they will become ineligible for wilderness designation. A summary of land status related to wilderness for the entire park/preserve is provided in table 1.

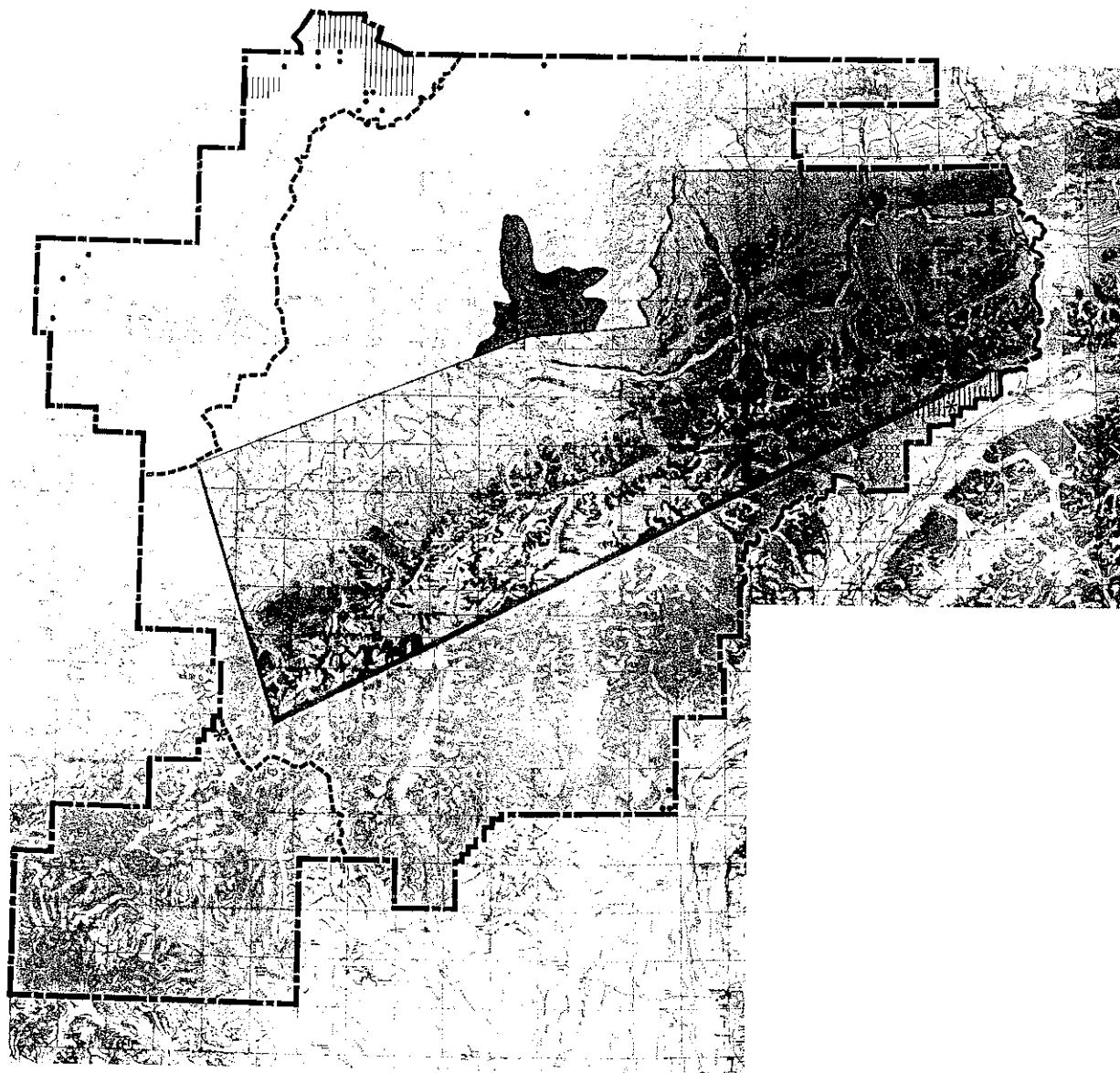
Table 1: Wilderness Land Status

<u>Existing Wilderness</u>		2,124,783
<u>Wilderness Study Area:</u>		
Unencumbered federal lands	3,654,293	
Native and state selections	66,573	
Unpatented mining claims	3,400	
Nonfederal lands	1,967	
Small tracts/native allotments under application	<u>110</u>	
Total, wilderness study area		3,726,343
<u>Unsuitable for Wilderness Study:</u>		
Old Park: Park developments (Riley Creek, Wonder Lake, park road corridor)	89,490	
New Park: Kantishna mining district	83,840	
Preserve: Navigable waters (Muddy, Kantishna, and Tokositna rivers)	<u>3,635</u>	
Total, unsuitable for study		<u>176,965</u>
Total, Denali National Park and Preserve		6,028,091

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The study area is composed of 3,726,343 acres of land in three discrete areas. The first area includes all the lands from the old park boundary northward to the new park and preserve boundary, a distance varying from 14 to nearly 60 miles. East to west the area extends from west of the Parks Highway nearly to Lake Minchumina and from the eastern extremity of the Kantishna Hills to the lakes south of the Snohomish Hills, a distance of 75 to 90 miles. Most of this area is a relatively flat, rolling landscape that slopes to the north, away from the Alaska Range. The major exception is the Kantishna Hills, which run north-south through the area.

These vast, stream-dissected lowlands are covered by a patchwork of vegetation and provide good habitat for caribou, moose, wolves, and bears. The uppermost elevations, above 2,000 feet, are mostly alpine tundra. The upland spruce forest mixes into the tundra between 2,000 to 3,000 feet in protected valleys and dominates below 2,000 feet in most areas. Further downslope, and often in valleys between the forested uplands, lies the bottomland spruce forest. In the northern preserve the landscape becomes dotted with hundreds of lakes, ponds, and bogs. Caribou are generally distributed in the area between the Swift Fork



■ Study Area/Suitable for Wilderness

■ Not Suitable for Wilderness

▨ Existing Wilderness

--- Park Boundary

— Preserve Boundary

▨ Land Selection, Native and State—includes subsurface and surface estates
*1,016 acres have been conveyed


• Small Tract Entries—includes native allotments, homesteads, T&Ms, etc.

x Mining Claims

Note: Nonfederal lands within the study area would become eligible for wilderness designation only if acquired by the federal government.

0 5 10 15 20 M
NORTH

STUDY AREA

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